



## The Vision

New Hope exists to multiply healing to wounded hearts, equipping and empowering those who have received comfort from God to comfort others with the comfort they have received, forming reproducing healing communities of people walking on the healing journey together. Our vision is that all those who have received comfort from God will be able to pass that on to others around them.

## The Process

New Hope groups consist of 4-6 people. They are designed to allow participants to tell their stories in a safe environment with others who have also experienced their own hurts. In a New Hope group, wounded people can experience community, develop a sense of purpose, and increase their faith as they learn about God's purpose in this world.

The seven sessions are designed to be done once a week over a period of seven weeks. The first session acts as a vision-casting session for the group. It introduces the idea of a journey that begins in wounded-ness and culminates in a place of new beginnings, and it offers participants the opportunity to embark on this healing journey together towards new beginnings. In this first session participants are also introduced to the story of Joseph—a man betrayed by his family, wrongfully imprisoned, and forgotten, only to see his life become a means of saving many people. In each subsequent session participants will be reminded of the vision statement from the end of Joseph's story: "Do not be afraid. You meant to harm me, but God used what has happened for good—not just for me—but so that many other people could be saved." Through this reminder, it is hoped that wounded people can begin to see the possibility that what has happened to them could be useful in some way to help others.

Each week, group members are encouraged to share personal stories that follow a progression of remembering happy times, talking about hard times, talking about hopelessness and feeling forgotten, toward bringing troubles to God, and then searching for purpose and a new beginning. Group members are given opportunities to share, listen, be listened to, celebrate and lament. Woven into this experience is a set of biblical stories that takes them on the journey that begins with God's perfect plan for the world. The stories then tell how sin and suffering entered the world, and how God planned for Jesus to take on our sin and suffering and give us a new beginning.

Participants are asked to share with others outside the group what they have learned each week. There are two reasons for this: 1) by giving away what they've been given, participants begin to find purpose, and 2) they become familiar with a very simple discipleship approach that helps them disciple others even as they are being initially discipled—thus multiplying the impact of God's healing Good News! Because this is a key component of the process, leaders are reminded to do everything they can to help participants internalize and reproduce both the stories and the process. Storytelling needs to be oral (not read), then practiced so that each participant can tell the story himself or herself. The process should follow the same three-part structure each week: looking back at what has happened before, looking up to find what God has for each participant, and looking forward to what is next. This process can establish the foundation for a new group of believers who meet regularly.





## Telling Life Stories

Healing occurs as people tell their stories to others who truly listen. Psychologists note that the way people tell their stories often gives clues as to where they are in the healing process. As people re-craft and re-tell their own stories over time, they play an active part in their own healing. It is often difficult initially for people to begin this very important step of sharing their stories, so this curriculum attempts to create a safe environment in which people can share. Participants are given the opportunity to share any personal story of their choice; but in any case, they are listened to by another person who asks them simple, open-ended questions that invite further exploration of feelings. In the process of sharing life stories, the participants experience the healing effects of sharing their stories with good listeners while learning to become good listeners themselves. Participants are never pushed to share more than they are comfortable sharing, and they may stop sharing at any time.

## Weaving Stories Together

Diane Langberg, an experienced Christian psychologist, in her book, *Suffering and the Heart of God*, (2015) expounds three vital elements for healing heart wounds: 1) ongoing connection and community; 2) a sense of purpose and meaning; and 3) faith—reminders of God’s presence even when he doesn’t seem to be there. As people, in a safe environment, tell their own stories of suffering and feel validated in their experience, they forge a healing community. As they learn appropriate Bible stories, they are reminded of God’s presence in their midst. More importantly, as participants learn Bible stories, internalize them, and tell them to others, the Bible stories are woven into their own stories, creating a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. In so doing, participants embody Joseph’s words that what was “intended for harm, God uses for good, so that many people can be saved.” (Genesis 50:20)

## Comments from Counselors and Church Planters

Stressful events can cause a wide variety of negative consequences on a person, including mental and emotional difficulties. These difficulties, or heart wounds, can create barriers to the Gospel; that is, they can seriously hinder people from properly hearing and responding to the Gospel. Sometimes these difficulties, or heart wounds, can take the form of mental illness. Individuals with mental illness should be encouraged to seek professional help; however, non-professionals using basic support skills can also help many people who have experienced heart wounds. New Hope gives non-professionals some basic supportive skills to help them listen and care for people who have been through a stressful event, but New Hope facilitators also refer people to professionals when they need more care than a New Hope group can give.

Not everyone is ready to participate in a New Hope group. Some people who have experienced emotional or physical wounds may need to see a doctor or mental health professional. They should see a doctor or mental health professional. When gathering people together for a New Hope group, the healing group leader should ensure that each participant can have an interactive conversation that is not entirely focused on himself/herself or his/her own problems. The participant must be able to tell most of his heart wound story and be able to calm himself down after telling his story. The healing group leader should feel confident that the person can go home and be relatively calm at home after telling his story in a session. If a participant begins in a group but the healing group leader realizes that the person can only talk about his own problems without listening to others also, or finds it difficult to calm himself down after sharing, the leader may want to suggest that the participant re-enter a group at a later time.

In the same way that not everyone is ready to participate in a New Hope group, not everyone is ready to facilitate his/her own New Hope group. When facilitating a New Hope group, healing group leaders should be able to have a conversation that is focused entirely on the group members without being distracted by their own heart wounds. In addition to participating in a previous New Hope group, people facilitating their first healing group training of trainers should be given additional information, including material on self-care, mental health, and the theory behind the development of New Hope.



They must be able to listen effectively and be comfortable discussing difficult issues. Even though they would not necessarily be discussing their own heart wounds in a group that they are facilitating, they should have been able to demonstrate the ability to talk about their past in a previous group and to engage in appropriate self-care. The assumption should be that someone who is willing to lead a New Hope group is healthy enough and has the appropriate skills unless proven otherwise.

These initial New Hope sessions do not address specific traumas that people experience. They are not meant to — some of those may be addressed in later sessions (see supplemental sets on the website). These initial seven sessions are meant to lay a strong groundwork to which people can be referred later as they work through specific trauma. They are also meant to give lay people the basic skills to walk alongside someone through listening well to his or her story and responding appropriately with God's Word.

## overview of sessions

SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4	SESSION 5	SESSION 6	SESSION 7
Looking Back ← Heart Wounds — Villages	Looking Back ← Listening Drama — Listening	Looking Back ← Listening	Looking Back ← Listening	Looking Back ← Listening	Looking Back ← Listening	Looking Back ← Listening
Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Joseph</b>	Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Creation</b>	Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Fall/ Promise</b>	Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Bleeding Woman</b>	Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Jesus Died</b>	Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Jesus Raised</b>	Looking Up ↑ <b>STORY: Power to Live</b>
Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray	Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray	Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray	Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray	Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray	Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray	Looking Forward → Vision — People — Practice — Pray

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